

I'm *not* afraid of you,
but I'm *afraid of* what
you do to *me*



*The link **to**
the video*

<https://youtu.be/4RetqW3OAdM>

Fatal Casualties

“*Jag är inte* rädd för dig,
men jag är *rädd för* vad
du gör med *mig*”

— Maria *Levina*

Major: Visual Communication

Language of the content: **English**

The thesis is an art based project with the written part.

The project consists of a noncommercial music video and photography (for the single cover)

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



The *lyrics* of a song

I bakfickan hittar jag kvittot från igår
(In the back pocket I find the receipt from yesterday)

En blöt sen kväll, jag är full av sår
(A wet late evening, I am full of sores)

Du är min kung, över känslor
(You are my king, of feelings)

En joystick som får mig dit du vill
(A joystick which leads me to where you want)

Jag är inte rädd för dig,
men jag är rädd för vad du gör med mig
(I'm not scared of you,
but of what you ´re doing to me)

Slowmotion, is my lonely friend
Please, keep entertaining me
I ´m not to deceive or manipulate
Don ´t coerce me into silence

Jag är inte rädd för dig,
men jag är rädd för vad du gör med mig
(I'm not scared of you,
but of what you ´re doing to me)

Please, do remember
I'm not scared of you,
but of what you ´re doing to me
Please, do remember

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



The storyline *of the video:*

The movie begins with slowly moving sea foam. It appears in the middle and in the end of the video. The sea foam represents the flow of being. The second frame of the movie depicts three figures with their faces covered under veils. The room is almost empty, but there is a mirror and a window with a strong light behind the three figures. They begin moving behind the protagonist and meet just behind his back in the light of the window.

Then a couple of scenes happen in the same room filled with a fog, where the main character is sitting. There are the same mysterious figures around him. He does not see them, but gets frightened, when they move or produce an accidental action nearby him. They represent “the fear of others” inside of the protagonist’s head. In the final part (third part) the protagonist is sitting in front of the mirror. When he takes the veils off, he recognizes himself in those two figures. This means he understands that he is afraid of himself in others, his reflection, and the ghost. In the very the protagonist bows a head in front of the mirror, which means he receives this reality.

The content:

— *what is the substance of the music video?*

— Introduction:

Multifunctional Designer

— Art references:

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Philosopher in Meditation:

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Frozen moment and a dream

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— Philosophical references:

Theme of Fear / “Angst”

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Multifunctional *Designer*

As the final work for the thesis I have made the noncommercial music video with the photography for its promotion. My major is Visual Communication, and I believe in a big variety of the ways how to express this field from the inner world of an artist to the spectator. It doesn't have to be only a poster or an animation. The digital century has brought us the requirement to merge all the fields of creative professions together. Nowadays, the clear boundary between the obligations of an art director, photographer, motion designer or a graphic designer has disappeared. For instance, if an art director has to produce a branding project, the person must show the multifunctional ability of understanding the process: to come up with a creative idea for the branding, to see the whole picture in the head with colors, images and shapes. Besides, art director must see all the interactions of the visual storyline with the surrounding environment, the way finding systems, for example. What is more, there has to be one of the first important parts of branding to be included: photography and video.

I have been making photography for a long time in my life, while being graphic designer at the same. In my opinion, moving image and photography have straight connection to the field of Visual Communication. As a matter of fact, video is already a moving picture (photography) itself. Moreover, both disciplines have a message to transmit for a spectator. As well as any other visual/ design object has. When people look at the picture (doesn't matter: logo, postcard, poster, photo or a music video) their brain catches the idea at the first glance. So the idea is the main criteria for a product of Visual Communication, it is not the technique or a type. All in all, I guess it is not necessary to mention there is no certain type of Visual Communication nowadays. A graphic designer creates mixed media illustration based on photography with hand drawn picture, for example. Designer might produce moving animation or titles for a movie, where happens integration of graphical elements into the moving picture (video).

In a word, I like to experiment with techniques, break illusion of the disciplines being separated in the art/design field. I like to try things myself, find the best image I can create for a spectator, and the best way to express it.

Furthermore, we are able to see that almost everything *is* a picture, and every picture is built up according to the same rules of composition. Image consists of lines, shapes, objects, which are located in the digital space or on the surface of the paper. Design is the basic understanding of composition. The example of a designer in art field is Malevich. What he did was mainly design work painted on a canvas. Make the elements on his canvas animated and he could become an animator. Almost the same I did in my art work. I wanted to try out how I can make images in my head become alive and animated.

In simple words, everything around us is more or less image, what has been pretty much admitted by many writers and philosophers of the last decades. The dominant role of the image has started from 20th century and especially with the advent of the postmodern times, when digital art was invented. A postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard (27 July 1929 – 6 March 2007) was a French sociologist, philosopher, cultural theorist, political commentator, and photographer. His best known theories involve hyper reality and simulation. Jean Baudrillard in his work "Simulacres et Simulation" discussed the idea of our reality consisting out of the images and signs. In addition, the philosopher developed this idea by the statement that: "Today, reality has been replaced by sign systems that recodify and supplant the real. Simulation precedes and determines the real", he speaks about modern time, when people even live in repetition of the signs.

Personally, I believe that the reality is composed by the archetypical signs and images. The historical and cultural background exists everywhere around, so these cultural signs subconsciously arise in the brain of a human being as associations in the moment of experiencing any art work or even a simple advertisement. Usually, a designer or an artist refers to common archetypes on a purpose. There are a lot of examples around: such as packages of porridge with a traditional Finnish girl in the national costume on the cover. The common example from the field of graphic design is using fonts based on epoch: Gothic, Bauhaus, modern, letters from Communist posters and so on. I could be talking a lot about these cases.

However, I just wanted to tell that in my thesis project I got inspiration from archetypical signs of the culture as well. I used images and historical background from the paintings of the Middle Ages and mixed it with the touch of everyday life genres from Dutch Golden Age paintings (17-18th century). The reasons for the specific choice of the style and historical time will be discussed a bit later.

Lonliness and hope: *walls with a window*

First of all, I try to come up with a “visual” mood of the story, when I start to create a project, whatever it is: a logo, visuals, photography, video or illustration. This includes also choice of colors, symbolism, composition, objects, everything that is needed to build up the general atmosphere. The visual mood goes hand in hand with the main message of content. I get most of inspiration from the content. In the case of my thesis video I got the inspiration from the melody and idea of the lyrics: *I’m not afraid of you, but I’m afraid of what you do to me*. The meaning and the sound of this song is very close to my philosophy, so it was quite easy to come up with the story. Therefore, I had to focus on the music first.

The song is very much melancholic, it is slow; it has strange sound, which reminded me of some medieval instruments. The voice in the song is quite neutral, so one doesn’t pay attention neither to the gender of the singer, nor to the style of music. It causes the feeling of something unreal, or more to say surreal world. Moreover, the music made me feel a bit frozen in time as it is slow. The rhythm of the melody is not typical for the popular scene. As a result, I had to invent a special world, which reflects this particular story.

The main topic of the video is fear. It is not the life-and-death situation, but existential, mental dread of being hurt by others. The fear of others is loneliness. Loneliness means building up a wall of one’s mind. That is how I came up with the image of walls in my art work. I wanted to show the main character surrounded by old walls of an almost empty room. It is a symbolic meaning of his inner state of mind. Moreover, the destroyed walls symbolize inner distraction and routine of being lost in the trap of the emotion. The inspiration came from Dutch Golden Age paintings, where artists used to depict everyday life situations of peasants. Usually, the paintings have dark tones, grey palette and brick walls. Nevertheless, one can notice a window in the walls with the light coming out of there. This composition is very common for the paintings of the Middle Ages. Personally, I did not want to make the video line look desperate, dark, hopeless or frightening. My aim was not to make a horror movie, but to declare the thoughtful procedure of comprehension oneself.

Doubtless, art exists to make a communication and dialog with the spectator. I wish to share my insights with other people through my work. In the first place, I wish to question our being,

to find the answers in order to improve the life. The act of asking questions and seeking answers is fundamental to all human creativity and willful living. Successful communication with an art work is not simply the mechanical process of “decoding” it. Rather, it is a process of active investigation. Good way to approach an art work is to look at it with questions and develop new questions after the presentation is done. I believe the video or a book gives the best chance to experience somebody’s life.

Back to the context, the lyrics and music are sad, but at the same time they are light and give a hope. The goal of the protagonist is to seek the truth by the experience of loneliness. Therefore, he distinguishes himself as a living being with emotional world from other human beings. He tries to analyze the reason of fear. After all, the protagonist understands psychological condition of this state of mind. Thus, the content of the video must depict how does the main character act in the position of loneliness and how does he analyze his fear. This is shown in the plot of the video.

Besides, the story is based on existential state of loneliness. This could be illustrated as the wall with a window. Let us see why: “Loneliness in this sense is not the same as suffering the loss of a loved one, or a perceived lack of a sense of wholeness or integrity. Further, it is not the unhealthy psychological defense against the threat of being alone, especially if being alone means we must confront the critical questions of life and death. Rather, existential loneliness is a way of being in the world, a way of grasping for and confronting one’s own subjective truth. It is the experience of discovering one’s own questions regarding human existence, and of confronting the sheer contingencies of the human condition. From an existential perspective, the lonely individual seeks to grasp some meaning in the face of life’s impermanence, the angosise of human freedom, and the inevitability of death.” From an essay by Michele Carter, “Abiding Loneliness: An Existential Perspective,” published by the Park Ridge Center for Health, Faith, and Ethics in Illinois.

Loneliness forces us to look into the abyss of nonbeing, and compels us to make a decision. The seduction to exterminate uncomfortable subjectivity is resistless for perhaps most people, and they hunt for any experience that will allow them to forget about it. There is always the sense of belonging that membership in a group can provide. There is an existential secure in living an “appropriate” life, being associated to the capacity center of one’s society, having a respectable job, a family, a material comfort. This path is not in and of itself false: that would depend on the person. Many find meaning and execution most of all in such a life. But this path may also be chosen as a result of facing one’s own freedom and individuality as a threatening remark: some would prefer to run away from a life that gives hope of approval and creativity than to suffer existential insecurity that it requires. Indeed, it is common statement that feeling of loneliness is a negative appearance. Despite this fact, I try to investigate this phenomenon from a positive side.



Philosopher *in* *Meditation*



In my visual work I wanted to create an image of loneliness as the path to the deeper understanding of the nature. To find an answer to the question: how to stop escaping oneself from the existential insecurity. The opposite state to the belonging to a group is isolation. Of course, I am talking about philosophical phenomenon, not the physical reaction. I see the isolation as a required step to cut oneself from the identity with a group and its standard values. As my protagonist does the transformation from being separated to the freedom of acceptance himself and his fears.

Friedrich Nietzsche on his solitude from autobiographical passages: “I need solitude, which is to say, recovery, return to myself, the breath of a free, light, playful air.” Solitude assured the source of inspiration and creative fountainhead for Nietzsche, his “hidden aspect,” as Jung considered. Moreover, solitude naturally accompanies a human being from the birth: we all come to the world alone and leave the world in the state of loneliness. Why not to stop running away? But to use it as the source of life and freedom. “One must avoid chance and outside stimuli as much as possible; a kind of walling oneself in belongs among the foremost instinctive precautions of spiritual pregnancy” (Nietzsche’s Revolution: Décadence, Politics, and Sexuality, page 190). Thus, why not to start acting positively by facing the humans’ origins instead of running away and fulfilling the fear of emptiness.

“Philosopher in *Meditation*”

Depicted characters in my art works are not objects, they are thinking subjects. They live their own stories with their own emotional worlds. More to say, I invent these characters to share their thoughts and truth. They have their mysteries inside, which I would like to put on the screen or a picture. As a reference and the main inspiration here I could use the painting “Philosopher in Meditation” made by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn in 1632. I have been admiring this painting for a long time. It depicts an old man sitting on a chair in a dark room with old stone walls. The man is sitting next to the window. He is so deeply absorbed in thought, it seems that he almost fell asleep or he is frozen in time. The room is relatively empty and painted in shades of gray. The philosopher is sitting next to the bottom of the spiral staircase made from the stone. The single small moving element is the man in the lower right corner of the painting, who is tending a fire in an open hearth. The painting and the philosopher cause a feeling of something fundamental, significant, meaningful. It all looks like the time doesn’t have power there. The man became a part of the eternity and he rests in peace in another dimension.

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



The small figure making a fire just underlines the beauty of the philosopher's inner peace and frozen time around him. Personally, I see the philosopher as a symbol of the human spirit and eternity. And the opposite symbol of material life is a small figure of the fire maker. Who is trying fussily to keep the unstable spark of the life burning, like he knows that it will fade away soon.

I described this painting in such details, because it is a very essential reference to my video work. There is the same image of a thinking subject with its reflection of eternity, who is trying to deal with the simple manifestations of transient life and the psyche. The figure of the philosopher in the painting is absorbed in thought and loneliness. Rembrandt portrays the similar meaning of isolation as I do: solitude is the way of the transformation and existential experience of a human being. For Rembrandt the thinking man in the painting depicted lonely because of a the process of meditation and investigation of the inner world. Usually, I raise the identical mood, questions in my own projects.

Aldous Huxley (1954) gives more explanations on the deep process of existential inner dialog depicted in the painting: "There hangs in the Louvre a Méditation du Philosophe, whose symbolical subject-matter is nothing more or less than the human mind, with its teeming darknesses, its moments of intellectual and visionary illuminations, its mysterious staircases winding downwards and upwards into the unknown." (Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, Harper & Brothers, N.Y., 1954, 95).

The caption to an illustration of the painting (reversed) in the psychoanalyst C. G. Jung's Man and His Symbols (1964) reads: "The inward-looking old man provides an image of Jung's belief that each of us must explore his own unconscious." (Carl Gustav Jung (ed.), Joseph L. Henderson, Marie-Louise von Franz, Aniela Jaffé and Jolande Jacobi, Man and His Symbols, Doubleday, Garden City N.Y., 1964, 103.)

The image of *a "Thinker" in art*

I would like to make a small break here to introduce the topic of a thinking man in art and the image of a solitary philosopher, who is seeking the truth inside of himself. Because it the obvious theme of the painting and the video as well.

Asceticism is an integral part of the being for a thinking man generally. For instance, Nietzsche transformed personal and creative solitude into a philosophical tool to critique and expose the speculation of tradition, culture, and society. As he put it in his autobiographical Ecce Homo: "I turned my will to health, my will to life, into philosophy." No longer a personal philosophy but neither a systematic philosophy in the style of Kant or Hegel, Nietzsche conveyed loneliness as the model of thought and existence for what he acknowledged to be a new category of thinker. Asceticism of an alchemist or a philosopher is a very popular scene in the paintings of Middle Ages. It was a convenient way to reflect and examine the difficult process of the society, which was getting ready for the coming epoch of Renaissance. This is also a reason why do I refer to the art of Middle Ages, because in my works I portray an image of a personality being absorbed in an "inner cave" of its thoughts.

Moreover, the traditional theme of a "thinker" or "investigating human" appears very often in the Genre painting of Dutch Golden Age (17-18th century). Wikipedia: "Genre painting, also called genre scene or petit genre, depicts aspects of everyday life by portraying ordinary people engaged in common activities. One common definition of a genre scene is that it shows figures to whom no identity can be attached either individually or collectively."

There are some examples: Salomon (de) Koninck with his painting Philosopher with an Open Book. Old Woman Meditating, 1660-1662 - Gabriel Metsu. Old Woman Reading, Rembrandt, 1655. Gerard Dou, The Painter in his Studio, 1647. Gerrit Dou, Scholar with Globe or The Astronomer, 1650. Bartholomeus Hopfer, Exilium Melancholiae, 1643.

Salomon (de) Koninck
Philosopher with an Open Book



Old Woman Meditating,
1660-1662 - Gabriel Metsu



Old Woman Reading,
Rembrandt, 1655



Bartholomeus Hopfer,
Exilium Melancholiae, 1643



Gerard Dou,
The Painter in his Studio, 1647



Gerrit Dou, *Scholar with Globe*
or *The Astronomer*, 1650



Melancholy

The paradigm of a philosopher or a “thinker” in art of 16th - 18th century goes hand in hand not only with a concept of solitude, asceticism, hope and silence. There is one more essential feature. It is a manifestation of melancholy. Melancholy is not a state of sadness. It becomes a symbolical investigation of the abyss of existence (nonexistence). The painting by Rembrandt is called “Philosopher in Meditation”; he portrays a meditation of an old man, who is full of wisdom and life experience. An Italian artist Fetti Domenico depicts different character in meditation in his painting “The Melancholy or Meditation” (1618 - 1622, Galleria dell Accademia). The protagonist is a dark-haired young man in long clothes, who is holding a skull. His face reminds a face of a young man from my video. Personally, I appeal to the concept of romantic melancholy very often in my works.

The examples are: the Philosophy by Sébastien Leclerc, 1707. Melancholy, etching by Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, 1640s. The Repentant St Mary Magdalene 1617-21 by Domenico Fetti. These beautiful art pieces declare melancholy as a deep process of contemplation and reflexion. The characters in the paintings do not suffer; they are looking for something, seeking the truth. The feeling is not about the lacking of harmony. I would say it is the process of investigation by questioning where the harmony is. This is significant mood in my video work too.

This theme in art comes from Medieval Times and rises very popular during the later 16th and early 17th centuries in England. The medieval occasion of acedia (acedia in English) and the Romantik Weltschmerz were similar concepts, doubtless to influence the intelligent audience. Johan Huizinga (“Pessimism and the ideal of the sublime life”, The Waning of the Middle Ages, 1924:22ff.) admitted that “at the close of the Middle Ages, a sombre melancholy weighs on people’s souls.” In chronicles, poems, sermons, even in legal documents, an immense sadness, a note of despair and a fashionable sense of suffering and deliquescence at the approaching end of times, suffuses court poets and chroniclers alike: Huizinga quotes instances in the ballads of Eustache Deschamps, “monotonous and gloomy variations of the same dismal theme”.

For two hundred years, approximately 1500-1700, melancholia was a widespread cultural phenomenon, considered as an infection of trend that associated with intellectuals and privilege. Its travails became part of a cultural vocabulary given form internationally in all branches of the creative arts (Jean Clair, et al., *Mélancolie: Genie et folie en Occident*, exh. cat., Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris (2005), for the visual tradition of melancholia from the medieval era through contemporary times).



*“And being so young/
And dipped in folly/
I fell in love/ With
melancholy.” —*

Edgar Allan Poe.

Melancholy,
Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, 1640s



Fetti Domenico
"The Melancholy or Meditation"



the Philosophy by
Sébastien Leclerc, 1707



Applying *a contrast*

Furthermore, the solitude is a painful destruction of the illusions (for instance, material comfort). Nevertheless, the protagonist in my video had to be depicted feeling isolated, lonely among other figures. Because the meaning of the song is questioning the relationship between the protagonist and the reality around him: other humans. In the story line two other figures are imaginary ghosts. The main hero doesn't see them, because they are illusive, but he is afraid of them. He is frightened by his own ghosts. But what could better make a focus on the solitude of the protagonist if not his presence among illusive figures around.

Going back to the painting "Philosopher in Meditation" made by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn in 1632. What is more, the loneliness of the philosopher is shown in a contrast with other figures as well. This specific method in art gives a chance to see connection between opposite things: how something that is meant to be opposite to each other coexists in relation. Rembrandt introduces the idea of the contrast in several ways, it is not only the contradiction of the two figures: calm philosopher in the light of the day and a woman in the lower right corner of the painting, who is tending a fire in an open hearth, while trying to light up a darkness around her. In addition it is the apparent play of light and dark, furthermore, two contraposed ideas of material and mental, poor appearance of the room confronts the depth of the philosopher's mind.

First, I would like to pay attention to the symbolism of material and mental aspect in the art piece of Rembrandt as a reference to my work. At one hand, I see the figure of the thinking man in the painting as a symbol of wisdom, eternity, deep process of cogitation. His figure seems not to be moving at all, like a stone existing independently of time. The philosopher has a very majestic pose, although he is just sitting in the old chair, wearing simple dress and the room around him looks quite empty, poor. However, this man looks "rich", because he is above the time and frail things. Concerning to my project, all of the characters are dressed up in simple clothes as well. The room is almost empty and looks poor too. The contradistinction of the simple perishable material world goes hand in hand along with the beauty of eternal thought in a mind of a human being. This is how I wanted to highlight the wealth of an individual absorbed in existential moment.

Second, I would like to talk about the relation between the people in the painting. Rembrandt used one more method to stress out the solitude and tranquility of the philosopher. He portrays the small figure in the corner tending a fire in an open hearth. This figure is almost falling out of the composition, which makes this character look even more unstable. Although, the philosopher takes the central composition in the space. The person making a fire looks nervous instead of tranquility of the thinking man. Moreover, the meditating man is sitting next to the window, in the spot of a strong light. While the small figure is drowning in darkness. His attempt to keep the fire in hearth seems very "**vanitas**".

vanitas *is a still-life painting of a 17th-century Dutch genre containing symbols of death or change as a reminder of their inevitability.*

Symbol of *a room/house*

Personally, I see certain resembling symbol of a house in my video and the work of Rembrandt. And what we in this layer most basically see is a room inside a house. Now a house may generally symbolize man. The outside of the house in this idea represents the outside or objective world and the inside of the house represents the inside or subjective world. The painting shows us the inside of a house and shows us thus man's subjective world. As one could notice, I use the room as the symbol of the subjective world of the protagonist as well. The story in the video looks like a dream of the main character, it does not look real. There is slow motion, surreal objects, and strange place. The space is blurred with the fog inside of the room. Consequently, I wanted a spectator feel like watching somebody's dream.

Furthermore, the old walls of the room in the painting remind the walls of the room in my video. This detail is very significant for me. The destructed beauty of the stone and the place appeals to the symbol of time. These walls are old: they have seen life stories; they are touched by the flow of time. And again they appear as a contrast to the immortal inner peace of the philosopher.

Silence and *the mirror*



As one could admit, wisdom is silent. It is a silence of mind, inner peace, and control of emotions. The thinking man in the painting is silent. This tranquility touches a spectator. It makes a spectator stop in a moment and feel the stillness too. Indeed, the protagonist in the video is looking for the analogous state of the silence while he is dealing with his fears. The first scene begins with the sea foam slowly moving from side to side, it appears in the middle of the story and in the end. The sea foam symbolizes the caducity of the human being. The second scene in the beginning of the video is a room with the protagonist and two figures inside. Two figures have their faces covered under veils; they represent the imaginary fears of the main hero. On the walls we see the word silence. This is what he is seeking for. In the end the last scenes (just before the foam) symmetrically display the protagonist sitting in front of the mirror.

Personally, I believe the mirror is a very important symbol there. I wish a spectator would have this insight while living the story together with the main character. The mirror indicates that the protagonist is looking at the reality through his own glasses; as a result the reality reflects him. Which means he has found the answer: he is his fears himself. He accepts it and bows the head down. This is the moment of his established silence. Silence, within its frozen reality, keeps an animated world of expressions.

Obviously, this theme has a particular resonance with my video as well as the play of light and dark.

Light and dark

Chiaroscuro:

The term chiaroscuro belongs to the fine art painting modeling effect of applying a strong contrast between light and dark to give the illusion of depth or three-dimensionality. These origins from the Italian words meaning light (chiaro) and dark (scuro).

In a lecture given at the Goetheanum in Dornach (1916), the ex-theosophist and founder of the Anthroposophical Society, Rudolf Steiner, described the Louvre Philosopher as the “purest expression of light and dark... All that you see here—the architecture and all the other features—merely provided the occasion for the real work of Art, which lies in the distribution of light and dark.”: Rudolf Steiner, “The History of Art: Rembrandt” (lecture 5), November 28, 1916, Dornach (Eng. translation, Rudolf Steiner Library, Anthroposophical Society of America, N.Y., 9). Personally, I paid attention to the symbolism of dark and light in my work too. The window in the wall is the general source of light in the room. The protagonist in the video takes central point in composition of the scenes. Moreover, he is always next to the light from the window. As a matter of fact, the window has metaphorical fallout of hope, the guiding light out of a cell of this subjective world (the room).

One should note that in the work of Rembrandt the meditating man is sitting next to the window, in the spot of a strong light. It is the main source of the light in the painting. Nevertheless, Rembrandt beyond controversy goes much deeper using the symbolism of dark and light. For instance, the whole picture looks like a Yin Yang symbol. Which can be seen in the tear drop shape of light, and the opposite tear drop shape of darkness. The curved staircase that goes both up and down, the figure stoking the fire in the lower right and the circle that is almost in the very center of the painting. This strange Yin Yang structure of the composition makes the room seem to a spectator a bit unreal place. This becomes a boundary between real room with a window, stairs, people inside and some kind of an imaginary vision. As one could remember, the room here is the symbol of the subjective world. Consequently, the room is the scene for the story of unconscious or inner processes of an individual.

The similar surreal visions, composition with the predominant of a window in the composition much remind the works of painters of the late Middle Ages.

The touch of surrealism/ Composition in the paintings of the late Medieval Art and Renaissance

The 14th century was a time of great crisis; infectious disease, the plague, the Hundred Years war, and the cataclysm in the Catholic Church all shattered people’s trust in government, religion, and their fellow man. In this dark period Europeans try to obtain a new beginning, a cultural rebirth, a renaissance.

Wikipedia: “Renaissance art is the painting, sculpture and decorative arts of that period of European history known as the Renaissance, emerging as a distinct style in Italy in about 1400, in parallel with developments which occurred in philosophy, literature, music and science. Renaissance art, perceived as the noblest of ancient traditions, took as its foundation the art of Classical antiquity, but transformed that tradition by absorbing recent developments in the art of Northern Europe and by applying contemporary scientific knowledge. Renaissance art, with Renaissance Humanist philosophy, spread throughout Europe, affecting both artists and their patrons with the development of new techniques and new artistic sensibilities. Renaissance art marks the transition of Europe from the medieval period to the Early Modern age. In many parts of Europe, Early Renaissance art was created in parallel with Late Medieval art.”

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



As it has been mentioned, one of the most traditional motives is the window in this period. Windows, when they became ordinary and common in use, induced an upheaval in social perception. They brought a transparent boundary between the inside and the outside, according to the metaphorical fallout: subjective versus objective world. Furthermore, figurative perception of a window emerged by allowing people, in the safety of their home, to observe each other and approach strangers; by outlining the shadows and projecting our dreams on them. The history of art discovers an expansion of the windows-motif during the 15th century. Artists begin to include massively arches and windows: regularly without window panes. During those periods the windows were with shutters mainly to use them as weather permitting source, moreover, to be closed at night.

The allusions of the composition with the window:

Lucas Cranach d.Ä. *Lucretia*, c. 1528, Nationalmuseum Stockholm. *A Lady Writing at a Desk* by Master Of The Female Half Lengths, c. 1500. Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, c. 1475, Florence. *Barbara de Vlaenderberch* by Hans Memling, c. 1472-1475. *Portrait of Benedetto Portinari* by Hans Memling, c. 1487.

“Reflections on the window were always included - as a central architectural element and as a metaphor for human curiosity and serious research.” The Patek Philippe Magazine Millennium Issue (printed in 8 languages), H. J. Krysmanski article “Windows in Painting”. <http://www.uni-muenster.de/EuropeanPopularScience/win-sample/win-patek-text.htm>

During the latter half of the 15th century, there was a proliferation of portraits. Frequently displayed is the image of a young man with dark curled hair as a royal person. However, the young man usually depicted in simple, dark, long clothes. It is an allusion to the video by the contrast of external simplicity and inner majestic dignity of a character. Besides, the young man regularly is holding a book and standing with his back to the window.



Hans Holbein the Elder,
Portrait of a Woman, 1508

Nun in a veil.
Reference to the clothes
used in the film



Szene: Begegnung an der Goldenen Pforte, Detail

The references:

The Portrait of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro by Raphael, dating from around c. 1506. *Self-portrait* by Raffaello Sanzio, c. 1504–1506. *The Portrait of Lorenzo di Credi* by the Italian Renaissance artist Perugino, dating to around c. 1504. Hugo Van der Goes, *Portrait of a Man*, Gent, c. 1475, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Medallion* by Sandro Botticelli, c. 1480-1485. *Portrait of Derich Born* by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533. *Portrait of a young man holding a medallion* by Sandro Botticelli, c. 1480–1485. *Portrait of a young man with red hat* by Sandro Botticelli, c. 1485. *Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1485, by Hans Memling. One more portrait by Hans Memling, ca. 1472–75.

I have already mentioned many times the references to the art of Middle Ages in my video work. There is the concept of melancholic being, the thin boundary between the reality and a dream. Moreover, I used long clothes (reminding medieval) covering the whole body for my characters in the video. Like in a painting of Rogier van der Weyden the *Portrait of a Woman with a Winged Bonnet*, c.1440. This helps to focus on the storyline and symbolism of the visual language. Besides, it is traditional medieval clothes for saints. Like on the fresco *Freskenzyklus in der Arenakapelle in Padua (Scrovegni-Kapelle)*, *Szene: Begegnung an der Goldenen Pforte*, Detail, c. 1304-1306.

*composition with
the window:*



Lucas Cranach d.Ä. Lucretia, c. 1528



A Lady Writing at a Desk, c. 1500



Portrait of Benedetto Portinari by Hans Memling, c. 1487

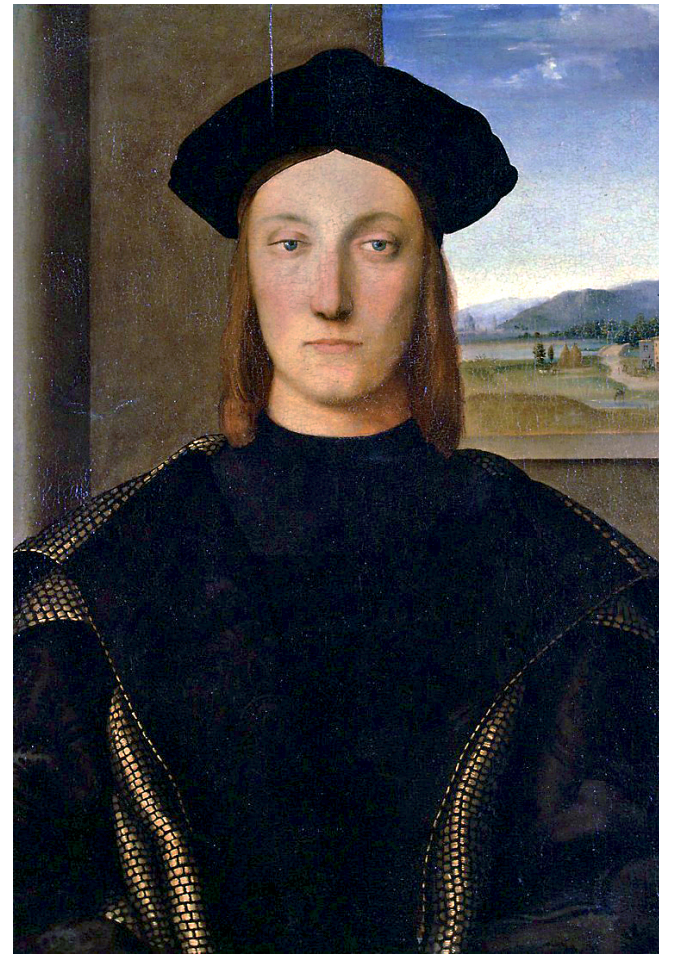


Barbara de Vlaenderberch by Hans Memling, c. 1472-1475



Sandro Botticelli, Portrait of a Young Woman, c. 1475, Florence

*Portrait of a royal
young man with long,
curled, dark hair.*



The Portrait of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro by Raphael



Self-portrait by Raffaello Sanzio, c. 1504–1506



Hugo Van der Goes, Portrait of a Man, Gent, c. 1475



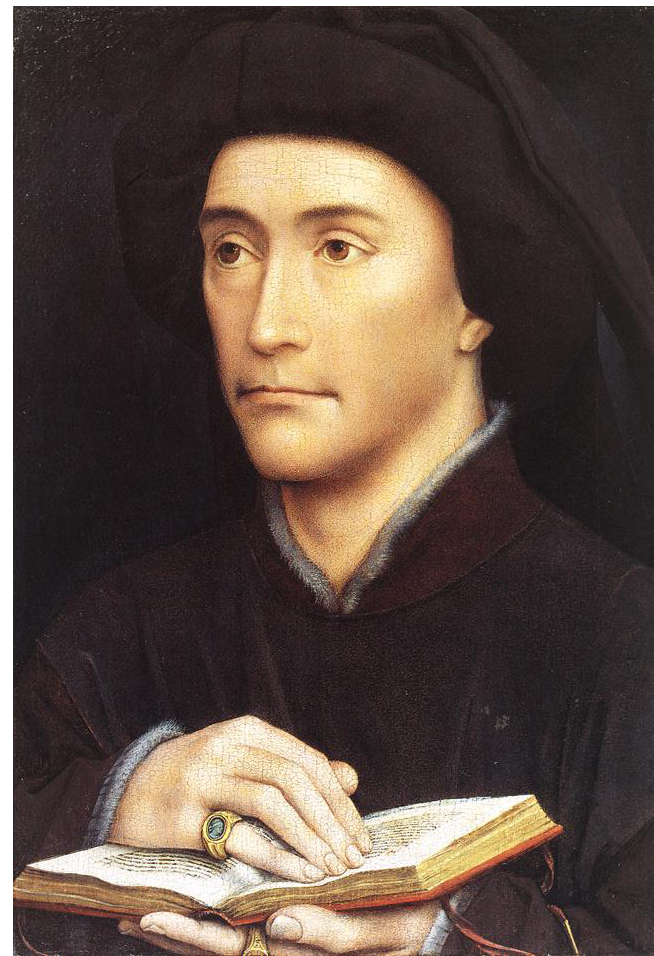
The Portrait of Lorenzo di Credi, Perugino, c. 1504



Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Medallion, Sandro Botticelli, c. 1480-1485



Ritratto di Giuliano de' Medici, Sandro Botticelli, c. 1478 - 1479



Rogier van der Weyden, a man holding a book.



San Giovanni Evangelista by Carlo Dolci, 1640-1650



Hans Memling, Young Man at Prayer

Frozen moment *and a dream*

As it is known, there is no feeling of the time flow in the state of dread. Usually, one doesn't register the reality, because the focus is moved from the real world to the object of fear or the situation. The common example is depression (which is generally fear of the past or the future). People can even forget about the time physically: they don't pay attention to the dates or hours. This argument was a reason for me to have an effect of the slow motion in the video. The figures in the sequences of my work seem to be frozen in time as the characters from the paintings of the early Renaissance. They all remind beautiful statues.

Phenomenon *of the marble statues under a veil*

One of the most important inspirational sources is the beauty and mystery of marble statues under a veil. The theme was noticed even in ancient Egypt. The example is a bronze statuette of a veiled dancer, 3rd-2nd century BC. Hellenism, made in Alexandria, Egypt.

The well-known sculptor for his marvelous series of statues under a veil was Antonio Corradini. Corradini was apprenticed to the sculptor Antonio Tarsia. He began his studies at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Corradini became on his own as a sculptor in 1709. He opened up his own workshop in 1713. Corradini was best known for his veiled marble statues which words cannot describe.

Antonio Corradini named one of statues "veiled truth". The veiled woman can be interpreted as an allegory of Wisdom, and the reference to the veiled Isis, special deity of the science of initiation, appears extremely clear (some facts admit the statue "Modesty" is located in the place where a statue of Isis stood in the Greek Neapolis).



Barry X Ball, *Purity*
2008 - 2011

after Antonio Corradini (1668 - 1752)
La Purità
1720 - 1725
Ca' Rezzonico, Venice

The art historians Joseph Rickwert and Rosanna Cioffi have also shown that the Veiled Truth engraved in the center of the title page of the Encyclopédie is very similar to Corradini's Modesty. Consequently, a veiled figure could symbolize hidden truth, wisdom, initiation. As the protagonist in the video is wearing a veil, while ha is looking for the answer. Finally, he takes the veil away in the end, when he gets the answer.

Back to the video work, the veil is one more significant sign of the allegorical narrative. The fear forces instinctively one to hide away. However, I am talking about a mystery and mysterious experience, which is hidden inside of a mental world of the protagonist. Although, I cannot argue he is hiding himself, because of the state of fear too. That is why he has a veil as well as the figures, who are following him in his illusive reality.

As one might remember, the room is a stage of subjective world. Considering this fact, covered and uncovered face is a metaphor of irrational and rational in a human being. Going back to the symbol of mirror: the main character is looking into the mirror and takes the veils away. This is the moment of silence and reconciliation of his rational and irrational (unconscious dread instead of others). The final point of the story: from hiding and escaping to revealing. Assuredly, the veil is a beautiful and melancholic mystery, intentionally brought into the video.

*bronze statuette of a veiled dancer,
3rd-2nd century BC., Egypt.*



*Antonio Corradini
La Purità
1720 - 1725
Ca' Rezzonico, Venice*



Antonio Corradini - Donna velata (Parigi, Louvre)



The Veiled Virgin of Giovanni Strazza



Kevin Frances Gray



Envy / Purity by Barry X Ball 2008 - 2012

To sum up

the art references

As a matter of fact, the movie came out to be a very symbolical visual story. It can be interpreted in many ways. I believe it looks like a melancholic medieval painting itself.

At one had, the film has certain correspondence with the means of expression in the work of Rembrandt “Philosopher in Meditation”: the colors palette, the appearance of space, the interior, the symbolism of the objects and ideas. At the other hand, it has light atmosphere of renaissance.

The lyrics of the music are about fear. Personally, I have been thinking about the phenomenon of humans dread for a long time. What does it mean and why does it exist inside of us? Is a fear the problem for an individual? Does it stop the personal development; does it make someone cut themselves from the social live? Or is it opposite? And it is something that triggers, pushes our existence further? Might it be the opposite: the dread just points out the weak sides of a person in order to improve them. What does it mean to be scared?

Theme of Fear / “Angst”

I am dealing with the idea of fear in the existential topic of my art work. I have been always interested how one's mind can be transformed by facing its own dread. Moreover, how does a mind project inner thrilling states to the outer reality: where is the border of subjective reality and projected inner demons onto the objective reality. How is it possible to improve ability to see objective reality by clarifying a mind from “unreal” thrilling demons. I believe this could be the way to improve communication between people.

Wikipedia: “ Fear is a feeling induced by perceived danger or threat that occurs in certain types of organisms, which causes a change in metabolic and organ functions and ultimately a change in behavior, such as fleeing, hiding, or freezing from perceived traumatic events. Fear in human beings may occur in response to a specific stimulus occurring in the present, or in anticipation or expectation of a future threat perceived as a risk to body or life. The fear response arises from the perception of danger leading to confrontation with or escape from/avoiding the threat (also known as the fight-or-flight response), which in extreme cases of fear (horror and terror) can be a freeze response or paralysis.”

According to Wikipedia fear is an emotion exists to save a being from danger or traumatic events. More to say, fear is just a risk to loose whatever it is: a life, a pet, a friend, a house etc... Nobody is prevented from losing everything. So may be humans can live better life without illusion of losing something? Because nobody owns anything. These are the stories I would like to tell in my art works.

As it has been already said, fear is a vital response to physical and emotional danger—if an organism didn't have it, it couldn't protect itself from reasonable threats. However, very often people fear situations that are even far from life-or-death, and in this case fall behind for no good reason. Psychological injuries or negative cases can trigger a reaction of fear within individuals, which is hard to put down. However, exposing oneself to their personal demons is the best way to leave the demons in the past.

Furthermore, I would like to examine in my art the psychological side of this phenomenon: when psyche lives in a past experience of being hurt and continues to see the reality through the past. This is how psyche invents personal ghosts in one's mind which destroys happiness.

Moreover, damaged mind with personal ghosts makes communication between people more difficult. I believe art is a straight path to affect bigger audience and create clearer, common reality for people. It is the space where minds can distinguish imaginary, painful projections of the past (which are locked in an individual) from more clear reality shared with everyone. At one hand, artists have skills and ways to express their personal stories. People get more united by sharing same traumas, same life stories. At the other hand, a gallery (a book, the theatre, an opera) can be the platform (even a reason) to join together for the better communication and even freedom.

Existentialism

The question of inner anxiety and its correlation with the existence is very well shown in the works of European philosophers called existentialists. Who have a big influence on my work? Existentialists describe a deep emotional world of a protagonist; they show the universe through the feelings and thoughts of the main character. Usually a protagonist has to raise inner conflicts, dramas, find answers for himself in a surreal world around. This method of storytelling makes a reader become the protagonist and live his life. As a result a reader changes as well as the main character by sharing the life of the protagonist, his inner dramas and conflicts.

Existentialism (French existentialisme formed from Latin word *existentia*, which means existence) and the philosophy of existence - a special tendency in the European philosophy of the XX century with the focus on the uniqueness of a human being. The philosophy proclaims the being as irrational, and proposes that an individual overcomes his own nature instead of revealing it. These European philosophers made an emphasis on the depth of the emotional nature. So they shared the idea that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject, not only the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, a living human being. While the prevailing value of existentialist thought generally recognizes freedom, its main virtue is the authenticity.

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



According to the existentialists, the starting point of the individual is characterized by what has been called “the existential attitude” or a feeling of disorientation and confusion in the face of seemingly meaningless or absurd world.

The first existentialist Søren Kierkegaard suggested that each person only is responsible for giving a meaning to life and actively living it, not society or religion. More famous writers and philosophers: Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Sartre.

As a matter of fact, I try to use in my visual art the same ideology and methods as the existential writers do. It is the idea of personal transformation through the reflection of the subject in the surrounding objects and surreal reality. The reference could be the idea of the book “The Metamorphosis” (German Die Verwandlung) a novella by Franz Kafka, first published in 1915. For instance, one more is the novel “Nausea” written by Jean-Paul Sartre.

Personally, I haven’t met the term “Existential freedom”. However, I would like to introduce this term as a contradiction to the meaning of “Existential angst”, sometimes called dread, anxiety, or anguish. The word “Angst” is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be a negative feeling arising from the experience of human freedom and responsibility. The archetypal example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. In this experience that “nothing is holding me back”, one senses the lack of anything that predetermines one to either throw oneself off or to stand still, and one experiences one’s own freedom.

In addition, the previous situation illustrates how angst is before nothing, and this is what distinguishes it from fear, which has the object. While in the situation of fear, one can make concrete measures to erase the final object of fear, in the situation of angst, not any “productive” measures are able to be done. The word “*nothing*” in this context refers to the immanent insecurity of the result of someone’s action, as well as to the fact that, in this experiencing freedom as angst, the person understands the full responsibility for all the consequences.

There is nothing in humans (so to say in general, for example) that acts in their place— that they can blame if something goes wrong. Therefore, not every choice is perceived as having a thrilling potential consequence (and, one could argue, human life would be unbearable if every choice facilitated dread). However, this does not change the fact that freedom is a condition of each action.

In my point of view, “Existential angst” means escaping somebody from themselves. In this case “Existential freedom” is a way of facing their attempt to run away from the life itself with responsibility of giving a meaning to life.

In 1929 Heidegger gave one of his most important lectures: “What is Metaphysics?” In this lecture he expanded definite notes from “Being and Time” by delivering a detailed philosophical analysis of the mood or feeling of angst. Among many emotions and states of mind, angst has a special philosophical meaning for a human, according to Heidegger, because it is a state of mind that reveals most clearly the fundamental nature of human existence. It is, in Heidegger’s thinking, not by means of conceptual analysis, but through the emotional experience of angst that we can learn what we basically are as human beings.

Heidegger starts his explication by distinguishing angst from the related experience of fear. Fear is always fear of something more or less specific that exists in the world. A person fears an armed attacker, a disease, poverty, or some other identifiable entity or event that poses a danger to him or her. A fearful person is always worried—looking around for something that may do him or her harm. Angst, by contrast, is not fear of anything specific, but a state of dread in which that which is feared cannot be pinpointed or described in any way. Angst is an all-pervasive feeling or mood that has no object. A person seized by this sort of dread cannot point to anything that would explain the feeling. If asked what he or she is afraid of, a person in angst may correctly say: “nothing”- and yet feel dread. What is happening in such a case, according to Heidegger, is indeed an encounter with “nothing,” or “nothingness.” “Angst reveals nothingness,” as he states in his lecture. (From: Jorn K. Bramann: Educating Rita and Other Philosophical Movies, Notes “The Eclipse” <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/MHeidegger.htm>)

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



Catharsis *as an act of art creation*

Introduction *into the meaning*

According to Aristotle Catharsis brings purgation and for me art exists to make us pure, better, united. I believe through pain, pity or fear we develop ourselves, negative experience makes us better, transform us from the depth, the bottom, teaches us to forgive and be more tolerant. One could be easily considered a saint living alone in the forest. Though it is a great spiritual work, challenge and effort to be saint and wise in society, where you can get betrayed, where you face lies, corruption, greed, death, temptation... More fears one faces stronger, happier, more independent one becomes. I could continue: more challenges open more chances for a transformation into something good.

In philosophical literature the word “Catharsis” has about 1,500 meanings. This word comes from the Greek word Katharsis, which means elevation, purification, recovery. “Catharsis (Aristotle’s term) - tragedy, says Aristotle, is a mimesis of a serious and complete action, having magnitude, which through pity and fear brings about a catharsis of such emotions”: Aristotle is using that term in the definition of tragedy in the Poetics 6 (1449b21-28). G.F In simple words the most popular meaning of Catharsis is purgation by empathy and suffering.

Personally, I use meaning of Catharsis as the process of relief, for me it is the Buddha’s story of his enlightenment, when he saw all of the imperfection of the world, faced this pain and suffering all around and then through being starving, punishing himself, his physical body, he came to his nirvana and wisdom. For Buddha, as an example, was the most important question what to do with the suffering in the world. Buddhism says that there are 3 poisons: greed, anger and ignorance (The documentary for PBS by award-winning filmmaker David Grubin and narrated by Richard Gere). Humanity does not have to eliminate them; the true way is to turn them into generosity, capacity and wisdom. So that’s what I mean as well: it is important to face our dark side and turn it into the light.

Perception of art is a difficult process. Moreover, it is cooperation with an artist. Personally, I believe art emphasizes, reveals and forces us to face then transform our dark sides. It is a tool not only for a spectator, but also for a creator. When I start to create something and it rises from that dark depth of myself it makes me feel like I am getting naked in front of the spectator, I am not the only one who is able now to see it. The process of facing my fears while creating the art piece is painful because of showing myself to others as well. The path how one could transform his pain even more easily into the opposite feeling, became better and free. The path that leads us to share our deeper thoughts with others. Art and our expression is the way to see that we all are just human beings, we do the same mistakes, have the same fears, do the same wrong things and it is normal way to learn the life. Sharing the same feelings through art experience unites us and gives us solutions to change.

For instance, in the story “The Picture of Dorian Gray”, which is a philosophical novel by the writer Oscar Wilde, Dorian is hiding a portrait of his ugly soul. However, his body remains beautiful. Dorian is afraid of getting old and ugly; he is not facing fears, but only hiding them, which is leading even to a bigger destruction of his soul. That is why we must use art to share, face and unite. These characteristics one could see in works of such artists as: Mikhail Shemyakin, Hieronymus Bosch, Andrei Tarkovsky, Elina Merenmies, Shinya Tsukamoto.

As this discussion illustrates art is a useful tool for a human being, even though Plato says “art is dangerous as well, because art leads you away from the truth, it is just imitation and you can’t rely on art for real knowledge”: The Republic (Greek: Πολιτεία, Politeia; Latin: De Republica) is a Socratic dialogue, written by Plato around 380 BCE. Otherwise, I believe in the opposite. Art is the truth, the naked soul of an artist, sharing inner thoughts and fears.



Catharsis *and* *personal reflexions*

I try to awake my demons and set them free in a hope, which will then in return, help other people to see their own demons and become free through going along the same path of release. I try to dig into my deep thoughts and set up my own questions in the works to help other people see their inner questions, which are important for them at the moment.

As an example, I had a photography project for the Russian-Japanese society which is called “11 mystical stories”. In this project I tried to bring to life demons from Japanese traditional legends. I dedicated a lot of my works and performances to the mysterious and dark side of Japan, because demons and relief through fighting with them creates a big part in Japanese culture.

Furthermore, I use the image of a skull in my works very often. Many people are afraid of this symbol. They try to avoid it in the daily life. This makes their fear rule them and let people hide from the thought of death. Would not it be easier, better to live while facing this question and trying to analyze it instead of running away from the reality? “Memento mori” means “Remember, we all die” or it can be seen as a reminder of vanity. This, according to my perception of Catharsis in art, transforms the scary symbol of death into an understanding of vanity of the material world. This helps people to live and do not depend on the material aspect, but receive pleasure from simple and natural things. For instance, pay attention to the beauty of the Universe, read books, go swimming in the lake...

Moreover, this reminder of vanity shows us that we are all equal; we do not have to spend time on competing with each other and wasting our life on negative emotions. The dark image turns into the feeling of support, unity and tolerance (based on our equality).

As a conclusion, I can say that Catharsis is a basic phenomenon in art. I still believe that art exists to save the world and make it better. A brave sight into the eyes of inner darkness brings us freedom and peace. The process is painful, but purifying. Art is our priest to whom we confess.

“Memento mori”

— *an object serving as a warning or reminder of death, such as a skull.*

The picture from the video:
Maria Levina ©



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